PRODUCTION BRIEF

Taking place in between the events of “Inside Out” and “Inside Out 2” is “Dream Productions,” an all-new series about the studio inside Riley’s mind where dreams really do come true—every night, on time and on budget. Riley is growing up and when her memories need some extra processing, Joy and the rest of the Core Emotions send them to Dream Productions. Acclaimed director Paula Persimmon faces a nightmare of her own: Trying to create the next hit dream after being paired up with Xeni, a smug daydream director looking to step up into the big leagues of night dreams.

“Paula is the most successful dream director at Dream Productions,” says writer/director Mike Jones. “She’s very proud of all her dreams that are filled with joy, dancing and glitter. When we first meet her, she’s really talking herself up, citing her many successes—though they are mostly from Riley’s toddler years—and giving credit to her crew. But deep down, she knows it’s been a while since she’s had a hit, so it’s all a bit of a front.”

The series marks Jones’ directing debut—a dream come true, perhaps. “I love dreams,” he says. “I remember my dreams almost every morning. So, when Pete [Docter] approached me with ‘Dream Productions,’ I said, ‘We can do an out-of-body dream, a sleepwalking dream, maybe a lucid dream!’”

According to producer Jaclyn Simon, the series is framed as a mockumentary—a mostly unseen crew follows the key characters, chronicling the process of making dreams and conducting impromptu interviews. “That’s definitely leaning into my sense of humor,” she says. “I loved the idea of diving into this world in this way.”

As Riley matures, her tastes are changing—her interests evolving. But Paula hasn’t changed her approach to Riley’s dreams. The idea came to Jones from a very personal place. “I’ve had to find new ways to talk to my kids as they grow up,” he says. “How does our role as parents change as our kids get older? I thought instead of always

trying to tell them things or teach them things, maybe we should have some faith that everything we've been teaching them, they'll remember and use those lessons on their own. Having that faith in your kid was something I really wanted to get into the series."

The episodes of "Dream Productions" were created while "Inside Out 2" was in the works. While each production worked independent of the other, it did allow some coordination—voice talent with roles on both titles could pull double duty, and the group of teen girls assembled to ensure "Inside Out 2" was authentically tapping into a teen girl's mind was also able to contribute to "Dream Productions." "We showed them different cuts of the episodes," says Jones. "What we learned from them is that they really loved all of the Hollywood touches. They wanted more!"

The role of dreams in the series is to help Riley process memories, feelings and maybe some of life's challenges—an idea that came directly from the research the filmmakers did. "We learned that when you go to sleep, you have physical paralysis—but your mind can freely explore," says Simon. "The prefrontal cortex doesn't allow for reasoning to come in—that's why our dreams can be so bizarre and out of left field. There are also clues in the research for how dreams can help you process. One expert said that if you're continuously dreaming about the same thing, it may be something that needs extra attention."

Adds Jones, "Stuff that might be tight in your brain before you go to bed can kind of loosen up through your dreams, so you wake up feeling refreshed."

Joy and the rest of the Emotions help determine what might need extra attention, and the team at Dream Productions gets to work creating dreams that are helpful, entertaining, enlightening and, importantly, memorable. Says Simon, "Riley's a little older, so the issues she's facing are different. In the series, everyone at Dream Productions is hoping to help her get through a tough decision around a middle school dance."

THE RIGHT LOOK

"Dream Productions," while set in the world of "Inside Out"—inside Riley's mind—takes viewers to a locale they've only seen briefly. The studio responsible for Riley's dreams is modeled after a film studio. According to sets art director Josh Holtsclaw, it was a small part of the original film—so an expansion was in order. "I did a deep dive into the world of Riley's mind—the shape language and the differences between the mind and real worlds," he says. "The challenge was to make it look like it did in that film—just more of it. We built everything from the ground up."

Holtsclaw and other members of the production toured studios, including the 20th Century studio lot and the Disney backlot. "It was cool to walk around," he says. "There's a lot of art deco inspiration—streamlined modern style of architecture that is really popular in the classic Hollywood look."

Adds Jones, “In our backlot, instead of a New York City façade, we have elements from Riley’s world. Her San Francisco row house is next to maybe her grandma’s house. And there’s a flat of the Golden Gate Bridge. Then we had some fun and built little bungalows for the directors.”

They also created a writers’ room, executive offices, giant sound stage and a coffee shop, among other sets. While Holtsclaw and his team were deeply inspired by real-life film studios, there was an important thing to keep in mind. “We’re inside a girl’s mind,” he says. “We couldn’t get too realistic because we’re inside a fantastical mind world. Sometimes that came down to having stylized wood grain or big, cartoony bolts. Everything is rounded off; some shape language is a nod to what we see elsewhere in the mind world. But we also threw in some of Riley’s favorite foods like pizza and cupcakes.”

SOUNDS GOOD
The music in “Dream Productions” is a departure from that of “Inside Out.” Says Jones, “We tried to forge our own path because I felt like ‘Dream Productions’ is its own story. I wanted to insert a bit more of that Hollywood jazz, big-band feel. Nami Melumad, our composer, wanted to create a Hammond B3 jazzy organ feel. The energy at Dream Productions should be different from Headquarters. Nami did a great job finding it.”

The score was recorded by an orchestra, as well as a jazz group with horns, bass guitarist, a rhythm section and a Hammond B3 organist.

Pixar Animation Studios’ hilarious, mockumentary-style series is written and directed by Mike Jones; episodes are also directed by Austin Madison and Valerie LaPointe. The series is produced by Jaclyn Simon. The voice cast includes Paula Pell as Paula, Richard Ayoade as Xeni, Maya Rudolph as studio head Jean, Ally Maki as Paula’s loyal assistant director Janelle, and Kensington Tallman returns to the world of “Inside Out” as Riley. The Core 5 Emotions are back, too, voiced by Amy Poehler as Joy, Liza Lapira as Disgust, Tony Hale as Fear, Lewis Black as Anger, and Phyllis Smith as Sadness. All four episodes of the limited series launch on Disney+ Dec. 11, 2024.

“DREAM PRODUCTIONS” STARS TALENTED CAST OF CHARACTERS
Director Paula Persimmon is Among a Host of Ambitious Creatives, Execs and a Dog Named Melatonin

Like the film studios it’s inspired by, Dream Productions is buzzing with crew members, directors, studio execs, baristas and stars—including none other than Rainbow Unicorn, perhaps the most famous performer in Riley’s early dreams. But it’s Paula Persimmon who’s the focus of the latest documentary in the “Dream Productions” story. Viewers will

get up close and personal with the successful director and those lucky enough to be in her orbit.

PAULA PERSIMMON is a seasoned director who's the recipient of several Slumber Awards for her extraordinary productions. Unfortunately, those awards aren't as shiny as they used to be. It's been a long time since Paula has had a hit—and she's struggling to relate to an older, more mature Riley. "All Paula knows are Rainbow Unicorn dreams," says director Austin Madison. "If Joy is like Riley's mom, taking care of Riley, then Paula is her fun aunt who loves to visit and spoil her. She's a ball of energy. But she's that aunt who was cool when you were little, but now needs to figure out how to reconnect.

"Paula has always believed that dreams don't need to have meaning," continues Madison. "They should just be fun. She's learning that maybe there's more to it."

Paula Pell lends her voice to the character. "Paula can wrap a line in self-deprecation that is really hilarious and heartwarming," says writer/director Mike Jones. "Her improv skills are spot on."

Adds Madison, "Since this is a mockumentary, it's supposed to feel like her lines are off the cuff. We were going for spontaneity and Paula Pell is a gem of a voice actor."

JANELLE has been Paula's assistant director for a long time. "If Paula is Riley's fun aunt, Janelle is like her big sister," says Madison. "She has a better idea of what kind of dreams Riley needs right now."

Janelle dutifully follows Paula's creative lead—fetching props, ensuring the crew is aligned. But Janelle has aspirations of her own—she wants to direct her own dreams, and it looks like opportunity is knocking. "Janelle is a sweet ingenue," says producer Jaclyn Simon. "She submits her reel and gets a shot at becoming a director at the studio. It's clear she belongs there.

"Ally Maki voices Janelle," continues Simon. "We all just adore her—Janelle is someone you root for from the beginning, and Ally made that really easy."

According to animation supervisor Tim Pixton, Janelle is a complex character. "She wants to support her friend, but is also going to grab the opportunity. For the early scenes, we wanted her to be soft in her movements. Then when she has a confrontation with Paula, we really pushed her to stand firm and embrace her own power—giving her more sharpness and punch."

XENI is an eager avant-garde creator who aspires to direct night dreams. His role as a daydream director has allowed his unusual storytelling approach to shine, and he's sure

it'll translate when he reaches the big leagues. "He's a frustrated independent film artist," says Jones. When he's promoted to assistant director of night dreams under Paula—he's ready to create a masterpiece.

Says Simon, "Xeni is very blasé—maybe right out of film school, and he already knows all he needs to know."

Richard Ayoade provides Xeni's voice. "Like Paula," says Jones, "Richard is a great improviser. We had them act off of each other, which is rare in animation. A lot of great dialogue came from those sessions."

JEAN is the head of the Dream Productions studio. She has a huge responsibility overseeing the directors—Marco with his sports dreams, Sheng handles action, Gigi's in charge of nightmares and Zach is the comedy guy. Jean's goal is simple—keep the hits coming. She's not always kind—but if things go awry, she has to answer to Headquarters.

Maya Rudolph helps bring Jean to life. "She quickly stepped into her idea of a studio head who singularly cares about Riley," says Jones. "We loved the kind of confidence and force that she brought, and we didn't have to give her a lot of direction. She did so well, she really gave us so much!"

MELATONIN is Paula's sweet puppy. He is by her side through thick and thin. Coincidentally, those who pet him fall quickly asleep. "Mel is a fun little character," says director Valerie LaPointe. "He's our little comic relief that pays off big in the end."

RILEY is a typical pre-teen who's heavily invested in her friends, school and family. An upcoming school dance has Riley on edge, though. Should she go? Should she ask someone? And most troubling of all—what will she wear?

Kensington Tallman provides the voice of Riley.

CORE 5—Joy, Disgust, Fear, Anger and Sadness—help Riley navigate her day-to-day life. They are always watching for complications in their girl's world that might be eased with a little extra processing courtesy of Dream Productions. And if the studio doesn't deliver, Anger knows just how to set them straight.

Amy Poehler, Liza Lapira, Tony Hale, Lewis Black and Phyllis Smith returned as the voices of the Core 5 Emotions. "They just slipped right back into their characters," says writer/director Mike Jones. "They just gave us so many different options—so many different line-reads."

RAINBOW UNICORN is the big star on the lot. She has her own trailer, and she has her pick of scripts. She can be temperamental at times, but Paula knows how to win her over. “Paula incorporates Rainbow Unicorn into most of her dreams, and they always appealed to Riley when she was younger,” says animation supervisor Tim Pixton. “But Riley is trying to grow up—she’s disconnecting from childish things.”

A LOOK INSIDE THE EPISODES
Four Episodes Track Paula Persimmon’s Career in the World of Dreams

Creating dreams at Dream Productions is a huge challenge—there’s a lot of pressure. According to producer Jaclyn Simon, the gold standard is not just if Riley remembers her dream—there’s more to it. “It might just be something she feels,” says Simon. “Everyone who’s working on her dreams is doing it to help Riley in some way, even if their methods are in conflict with each other. For Paula, it’s about letting go of what she knows—listening and learning.”

Top of mind for all the filmmakers at Pixar was the idea that the dreams in production are Riley’s dreams. “It was a lot of fun diving into it and pulling out my own memories of being that age,” says Valerie LaPointe, who directed the first two episodes. “We all loved exploring what's going on with dreams and how influential they can be.”

According to LaPointe, the mockumentary style opened some creative avenues. “It was very appealing because we haven’t done anything like that before,” she says. “In episode 2, Janelle confides something shocking to the camera in an interview, and when she turns to walk away, you can see that Paula has heard it all. She looks directly at camera. It’s gut wrenching, and we really wanted to lean into it.”

Filmmakers employed tactics like hiding a camera behind a bush to ‘capture’ private moments, as if the characters are not aware they’re being filmed.

For animation supervisor Tim Pixton, the series offered a lot of opportunity. “I think that’s one of the really cool things about the show—the style of every dream is really unique to the characters that are making them. It was a lot of fun for our animators to explore.”

PART 1: THE DREAM TEAM
Paula Persimmon was once the hottest director at Dream Productions, directing Riley’s favorite childhood dreams. But now that Riley is a teenager, Paula’s glitter-filled, cupcake-fueled productions are really missing the mark. Worse, her dependable assistant director Janelle gets promoted. Desperate for a hit, Paula throws everything she has into her latest dream.

The episode reveals Riley's worries surrounding the upcoming school dance, including a dress her mom wore when she was a kid that's "still in style." Says LaPointe, "That was a literal memory of mine at around 12 years old. My mom got very excited about a dress that looked like a little-girl dress with puffy sleeves and bows. I might've loved it when I was younger, but I had turned a corner."

PART 2: OUT OF BODY

Paula's new assistant director Xeni (aka the boss' nephew) is a pretentious former daydream director—his indie vision confounds Paula. Tasked with helping Riley process her feelings about a school dance, Paula creates a more mature dream that fails. She fires Xeni, and tries to win her old partner back. But Janelle's debut dream is a huge hit, leaving Paula's job on the line.

"Paula isn't in a great place, but she's trying to put a positive spin on it," says LaPointe. "She butts heads with Xeni in the first episode and now she's handcuffed to him, so this episode really has fun with their relationship. Paula directs a dream that is basically just painting over one of her old hits—of course, it's a huge failure."

PART 3: ROMANCE!

Paula reluctantly rehires Xeni, and they tackle a new dream genre: romance, starring Riley's Canadian boyfriend, who's resided in her imagination for years. The rocky partnership between Paula and Xeni sends their production off the rails, leading to unsettling and dangerous behavior in real life when Riley sleepwalks. Back in Dream Productions, the fallout will be dire.

Austin Madison directed the episode. "Canadian boyfriend immediately makes this episode a win," he says, who likens the beginning of the episode to the 'Inside Out' version of a rom com. "We had so much fun riffing on the genre. Riley's not boy crazy so she gets bored, which prompts Paula to start chasing the wrong thing.

"When Riley starts sleepwalking, it turns into a bit of a kinetic horror-movie sequence," Madison continues. "The studio lights come down and the camera tilts and it goes off on its own."

PART 4: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

When the studio boss strips creative freedom from the directors, everybody is on edge, including Xeni, who plots revenge on Paula. He writes a horrifying nightmare script that inadvertently ends up in production. Paula and Xeni must team up to stop the shoot—but surprisingly their efforts lead to an entirely new dream that just might give Riley the confidence she needs.

“Paula is given one more shot,” says writer/director Mike Jones. “She and Xeni are finally on the same page. They know how important it is to stop this awful dream, which is really is a recurring nightmare in which Riley meets her teenage self over and over again and gets embarrassed in front of her friends.”

According to Jones, sets art director Josh Holtsclaw and his team devised a brilliant set for the climactic part of the episode. “They created this cool carousel set that is circular, representing that constant repetition—Riley can’t wake up from the dream.”

ABOUT THE VOICE CAST

PAULA PELL (voice of Paula) is a legendary screenwriter in the comedy world, as well as an accomplished actress and producer. Pell is renowned for her Emmy® Award-winning work on “Saturday Night Live,” where she spent 20 years creating many of America’s favorite sketches and characters including Debbie Downer, The Spartan Cheerleaders and Bobbi and Marty. Additionally, she wrote the hit comedy “Sisters” and produced the film “This is 40.” Pell’s acting credits include “Girls5eva,” “A.P. Bio,” “Mapleworth Murders,” “Documentary Now!” “Inside Out,” “Inside Out 2,” “Big Mouth” and “Hudson Valley Ballers.” She currently resides in the Hudson Valley with her handsome wife Janine Brito and 10 animals. Somehow her home still smells really good.

RICHARD AYOADE (voice of Xeni) is a British comedian, actor, writer, director and presenter. The success of Garth Marenghi’s “Dark Place,” which he co-wrote, directed and starred in, was followed by his BAFTA Award-winning role in “The IT Crowd,” and numerous other TV credits including “The Mighty Boosh.” Ayoade wrote and directed the BAFTA-nominated film “Submarine” and wrote and directed “The Double,” starring Jesse Eisenberg. He presented “Travel Man” and “The Crystal Maze” for Channel 4 and has released three books, “Ayoade on Ayoade,” “The Grip of Film” and “Ayoade on Top,” all published by Faber & Faber.

ALLY MAKI (voice of Janelle) is a Japanese American actress and the founder of Asian American Girl Club, an apparel company and social impact community that aims to redefine what it means to be a modern Asian American woman. Most recently, Maki was a series regular on seasons 1 and 2 of the Apple series “Big Door Prize” opposite Chris O’Dowd. She also recurs on “Hacks” (HBO Max). On the feature side, Maki played “Miko” in Randall Park’s directorial debut “Shortcomings,” opposite Justin Min and Sherry Cola, which premiered at Sundance and was released by Sony Pictures in 2023. She also starred in “Seagrass,” which was in competition at TIFF in 2023, and can be seen in Freeform’s Marvel series “Cloak and Dagger,” TBS’s comedy

“Wrecked,” “Dear White People,” “New Girl,” “2 Broke Girls,” “NCIS,” “The Big Bang Theory,” “10 Things I Hate About You” and “Toy Story 4.”

Beyond acting, Maki is vocal about ensuring representation in Hollywood and was selected for the 2021 Gold House A100 List of most impactful leaders in the Asian community. She is dedicated to her mission of creating equitable and promising opportunities for Asian Americans across all walks of life, especially amongst young women and the next generation. Additionally, AAGC currently has television projects set up in development at Apple and Universal TV Studios.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

MIKE JONES (Director/Written by/Executive Producer) has been a writer and story consultant at Pixar Animation Studios since June 2013, and joined the studio full-time in March 2017. He co-wrote Pixar’s Academy Award®-winning feature film “Soul,” which debuted on Disney+ on December 25, 2020, and “Luca,” which released on Disney+ on June 18, 2021. He has served on the brain trusts of many Pixar films including “Finding Dory,” “Incredibles 2,” and the Academy Award-winning features “Inside Out,” “Coco,” and “Toy Story 4.” He also serves on the story trusts of many SparkShorts as well as features in early development. Most recently, Jones wrote, directed, and executive produced the upcoming original series “Dream Productions,” inspired by the world of “Inside Out,” and set to release on Disney+ in December of 2024.

As the series director, Jones oversaw all creative aspects of “Dream Productions” while also directing the series finale. In his capacity as the studio’s senior story and creative artist, Jones also works with other directors to develop their story in its early stages. After early development, Jones continues to work with the production departments as needed by writing sequences, consulting on storyboards, and advising on editorial assemblies.

Before joining Pixar, Jones was a working screenwriter for 20 years. He also served on the editorial staffs of Filmmaker Magazine, Indiewire, and Variety.

Jones grew up in San Antonio, Texas. He resides in Northern California.

JACLYN SIMON (Produced by/Executive Producer) started at Pixar Animation Studios in June 2005 as a production assistant. Since then, she has worked in different production management roles on numerous projects at the studio including features, short films, and theme park attractions. Some of her past films include “Cars 2,” “The Good Dinosaur,” and “Cars 3,” as well as Academy Award-winning features “Brave,” “Inside Out,” and “Soul.” Most recently, Simon produced the upcoming original series “Dream Productions,” inspired by the world of “Inside Out,” and set to release on Disney+ in December of 2024.

As a producer, Simon partners with the director to bring their creative vision to the screen, on time and on budget. She helps build a team to align with that vision and collaborates in decision making throughout the production process. Simon's role is also to create and foster a creative culture that allows artists to do their best work.

Prior to Pixar, Simon worked as a casting director for feature films and on/off Broadway productions in New York City. She grew up in Queens, NY, and attended Washington University, in St. Louis, Mo.

She currently resides in Piedmont, Calif.

VALERIE LAPOINTE (Directed by) began at Pixar Animation Studios as a story intern in the summer of 2006. She was a story artist on shorts including "Presto" and "Partysaurous Rex," on several "Mater's Tall Tales," on the Toy Story Toon, "Small Fry," and the TV special "Toy Story OF TERROR!" LaPointe also worked on Academy Award®-winning feature films "Brave" and "Inside Out," as well as story supervisor on "Toy Story 4." LaPointe also directed the Disney+ short "Lamp Life," which features Bo Peep from the "Toy Story" films. She most recently directed on the upcoming original series "Dream Productions," inspired by the world of "Inside Out," and set to release on Disney+ in December of 2024.

Raised in Virginia Beach, Va., LaPointe received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in art and animation from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She attended graduate school at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where she received her Master of Fine Arts in animation. At USC, LaPointe produced and directed her own short films. She also worked on music video projects and commercials, mostly doing stop-motion animation for Partizan Entertainment before coming to Pixar.

LaPointe currently resides in Oakland, Calif.

AUSTIN MADISON (Directed by) joined Pixar Animation Studios in June 2006 as an animator. He has worked on Academy Award®-winning films including "Ratatouille," "WALL•E," "Up," "Toy Story 3," "Brave," and "Soul." Madison also was a story artist on short films "Party Central" and "Lou." Most recently, Madison served as a director on Pixar's upcoming original series "Dream Productions," inspired by the world of "Inside Out," and set to release on Disney+ in December of 2024.

As part of a trio of directors on "Dream Productions," Madison had the task of expanding the dream making studio lot originally discovered in "Inside Out." As Pixar's first mockumentary style series, the crew pushed every department from story to lighting to capture the spontaneous energy of a real documentary production. This included recording actors together so that lines of dialogue organically overlapped, and

encouraging layout artists to "miss their mark," as if the camera operator was *just* catching a piece of the action.

Madison was inspired early in life by “Jurassic Park,” “Nightmare Before Christmas,” and Pixar’s own “Toy Story,” for the way they were able to transport audiences, taking them on emotional rollercoasters through epic new landscapes. What he loves most about being a director and story artist is being a part of creating the worlds that he was so influenced by as a child.

Madison is originally from Sacramento, Calif., and graduated from the character animation program at California Institute of the Arts.